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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the design, purpose, implementation, and outcomes of a policy forum on disproportionate representation of students from minority ethnic/racial groups in special education. The purpose of this policy forum was to develop an action agenda for implementation of two recommendations assigned a high priority by a group of stakeholders: (1) prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and should be made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment, and training should be provided in this area; and (2) training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration, and family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources. Two speakers offered remarks: Robert Solomon on prereferral strategies and Beth Harry on home-school collaboration. Forum participants then identified compelling reasons to implement the recommendations, barriers to implementation, and critical components of an implementation plan. Appendixes contain a participant list, a list of background materials for the forum, an agenda, and tips for successful prereferral. (JDD)

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ED 378 716

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUPS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:

A POLICY FORUM TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

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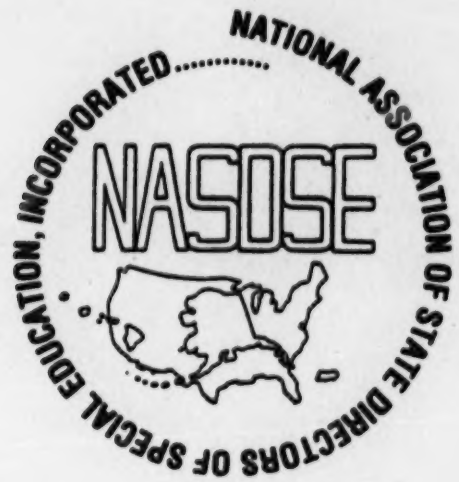

Convened on August 25th and 26th, 1994
at the
Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Pentagon City, VA

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Abstract

This report is the result of a Policy Forum convened by Project FORUM, a contract funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) of the U. S. Department of Education (ED) and located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). Project FORUM carries out a variety of activities that provide information needed for program improvement, and promote the utilization of research data and other information for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The project also provides technical assistance and information on emerging issues, and convenes small work groups to gather expert input, obtain feedback, and develop conceptual frameworks related to critical topics in special education.

This document reports on the design, purpose, implementation and outcomes of a Policy Forum entitled, *Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education: A Policy Forum to Develop Action Plans for Implementation of High Priority Recommendations*, held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Pentagon City, Virginia on August 25 and 26, 1994. Participants included state directors of special education, university-based researchers, parents, advocates, local education agency administrators, teacher union representatives, and representatives from national associations. In addition to OSEP staff, a number of other ED offices were represented.

During the course of the day and a half Policy Forum, participants delineated compelling reasons to implement the high priority recommendations and barriers to their implementation. Critical components of an implementation plan were also identified. OSEP will continue to examine the issue of disproportionate representation in the future with the support of Project FORUM at NASDSE.

DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION OF STUDENTS FROM MINORITY ETHNIC/RACIAL GROUPS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION:

A POLICY FORUM TO DEVELOP ACTION PLANS FOR HIGH PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Purpose and Organization of the Policy Forum

A. Background and Purpose

Concerns about disproportionate representation of students from minority ethnic/racial groups[1] in special education were first raised more than thirty years ago, and a myriad of litigation erupted in the 1960's and 1970's. The inclusion of certain provisions in the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now the Individuals with Disabilities Act-IDEA), illustrates the level of public concern about the inappropriate placement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education. These provisions require that the assessment process be nondiscriminatory in nature and that the instruments used to determine eligibility for special education services under the Act be free of cultural and racial bias. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 also requires nondiscriminatory testing procedures. However, it is important to note that these laws provide no criteria for identifying cultural or racial bias.

Since 1975, numerous studies and surveys have verified persistent patterns of disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education. In order to address continuing concerns about this issue, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), through a contractual arrangement with Project FORUM at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), conducted three activities in the 1993-94 fiscal year.

The first activity was a Policy Forum, convened in June of 1993. The purpose of the Policy Forum was to promote a national dialogue on the complex issue of disproportionate representation. The second activity was an analysis of current State policies and practices designed to minimize or reduce inappropriate placement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education programs. The third activity was a review of the current research and theoretical positions on the topic of disproportionate representation.

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[1] Although the term "minority ethnic/racial groups" was used when this Policy Forum was conceived and conducted, the more broadly accepted term, "culturally and linguistically diverse students" is used in this document.

A consolidated list of 35 recommendations for correcting the problem of disproportionate representation emerged from the three 1993-94 Project FORUM activities. These recommendations were then prioritized by a group of stakeholders from around the country who represent culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and different perspectives (e.g., state and local administrators, university staff, parents, advocates, policy makers, and federal agency staff). The two recommendations assigned the highest priority are as follows:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of parent/professional collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

These recommendations then became the basis of the second Policy Forum on the topic of disproportionate representation. **This document is the report of that second Policy Forum, the purpose of which was to develop an action agenda for implementation of the two highest-ranked recommendations for correcting disproportionate representation.**

B. Preparation for the Policy Forum

1. Selection of Participants

Project FORUM and OSEP staff worked closely to identify participants who would represent different perspectives on the issue of disproportionate representation, and who had knowledge and experience in the specific topic areas of prereferral strategies, culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, and parent-professional collaboration. Invited participants included state directors of special education, university-based researchers, parents, advocates, local education agency administrators, teacher union representatives, and representatives from national associations. Three participants from the 1993 Policy Forum were invited to the 1994 Forum to provide continuity. In addition to several OSEP staff, the following U.S. Department of Education offices were represented: Civil Rights, Inspector General, and Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

2. Background Materials

All participants received the documents from the activities described in Section A, either before or at the Policy Forum. In addition, participants received two articles that examined issues related to the focus of the Policy Forum. The articles are as follows:

Fletcher, T. & Cardona-Morales, C. (1990). Implementing effective instructional interventions for minority students. In A. Barona & E. Garcia (Eds.), *Children at risk: Poverty, minority status, and other issues in educational equity* (pp. 151-170). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychology.

Guild, P. (1994). The culture/learning style connection. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 16-21.

A complete list of the background materials provided to forum participants can be found in Appendix B.

3. *Logistical Details*

The Policy Forum was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Pentagon City, Arlington, VA on Thursday, August 25 and Friday, August 26, 1994. This hotel is located 10 minutes from National Airport, just outside of Washington, DC. Forum participants who live out of the immediate area were guests at the hotel. A buffet-style breakfast was served in the meeting room on Thursday and Fridays mornings, and a deli buffet lunch was served on Thursday. Optional group dinners were available for Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The Policy Forum ran from 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. on Thursday, and from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon on Friday.

C. *Process of the Policy Forum*

1. *Major Task*

The major task for the forum participants was to develop action plans for implementation of the top priority recommendations. The complete agenda can be found in Appendix C.

2. *Activities*

The first morning of the Policy Forum began with a welcome by Joy Hicks, Project FORUM's director, and opening remarks by Thomas Hehir, Director, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education and Lou Danielson, Director, Division of Innovation and Development, OSEP. Drs. Danielson and Hehir provided background information about OSEP's work in the area of disproportionate representation, as well as reflections on other issues closely linked to the topics at hand (e.g., poverty, assessment, educational outcomes). Ms. Hicks followed these remarks with a review of the activities which led up to this Policy Forum and a statement about the goals of the Forum. Participant introductions followed.

The next section of the first morning was devoted to two speakers: Robert Solomon, from Baltimore City, Maryland Public Schools, who discussed current issues related to prereferral strategies and Beth Harry, from the University of Maryland, who spoke on home-school collaboration.

Following a short break, Joy Markowitz, Project FORUM Policy Analyst, outlined the workplan and ground rules for the Policy Forum. At this point, the group was divided into two work groups. Each group was assigned one of the priority recommendations. The small groups were assigned three tasks to complete over the next day and a half. They were to identify the following: 1) compelling reasons for implementation of the recommendation, 2) barriers to its implementation, and 3) steps to implementation, including party(ies) responsible and timelines. After each small group session, progress was reviewed by the entire group and changes made. Due to time constraints, the group began delineating the steps to implementation, but were only able to identify critical components of an implementation plan. Party(ies) responsible and timelines were not addressed.

3. Summary of Speakers' Remarks

The following summaries were prepared using written notes taken during the speakers' remarks.

Robert Solomon: Prereferral Strategies

In Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS), approximately 18 percent of the students are identified as having a disability; this percentage far exceeds the national average. We can no longer afford to refer certain students because they frustrate us. But if these students do not get help, they drop out at a higher rate than average and their self esteem lowers. This is especially a concern for culturally and linguistically diverse students who may already have low self esteem.

General education teachers refer students for special education because they do not have the training necessary to work with students who have difficulty in the classroom; they see referral as their only option. To address this issue, BCPS developed the Consulting Teacher Model. A consulting teacher is a fulltime teacher-level educator, without classroom responsibilities. These teachers are trained in prereferral strategies and support all the educators in the school building. With this model in place, no student is referred for assessment without documentation that other strategies have been implemented, unless a parent signs off. If a parent signs off, "the assessment clock" start ticking.

One thing the teachers are taught is to describe behavior in behavioral terms (e.g., puts head on desk, off-task), not emotional ones (e.g., lazy, crazy). Next they refer to a computerized bank of proven strategies for the behaviors exhibited by that student. The goal is to replace the behavior of concern with something positive.

A School Support Team also promotes the prereferral effort. This team includes two or three general education teachers, one special educator, support staff, parent (if possible), custodian, and anyone else with good management ideas. The team members with classroom duties must have release time, because the team meets weekly during school hours. All students referred for assessment are intercepted by the School Support Team. Each student is discussed

for only 20 minutes; they use a timer to keep to their schedule. The result of the meeting is a short-term plan (few weeks) for the teacher and student. The plan is basically a shortened version of an IEP, but it is completed by the School Support Team. Another meeting is held in three weeks to review the initial plan. The student may be referred to special education at this time, or the initial plan may be revised.

The Consulting Teacher Model is effective because teachers receive personal attention; they are not just handed a manual and expected to figure out things on their own. We found that you must show teachers what needs to be done and, in this way, teachers learn what they did not learn in college. Anecdotal evidence indicates that teachers experience less frustration because they learn new classroom techniques. The year prior to the model's implementation, there were 1566 referrals to special education. The first year of its implementation there were 1047 referrals, a 33 percent decrease. We had only dared to hope for a 10 percent decrease.

BCPS initially funded this effort with Chapter 1 state compensatory funds. This year, with the enterprise concept and school-based management, each school has a choice whether they want the Consulting Teacher Model in their buildings. So far almost all schools have committed to this program.

[Mr. Solomon distributed the handout entitled, *Success Tips for Effective Prereferral*, which can be found in Appendix D, and made available for review the manual from the BCPS Consulting Teachers' Program. He also briefly described the following two programs, which they have found useful: RIDE Project - Respecting Individual Differences in Education from Colorado and COMP - Classroom Organization and Management Program from Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.]

Beth Harry: Home-School Collaboration

Although there are two parts to Recommendation #2--multicultural training and families--I will focus on the latter. However, the strategies I suggest for improving home-school collaboration will not work unless we take a multicultural perspective. We need to look at cultural beliefs. I will address three multicultural underpinnings.

1. *Cultural definition of disability* - We operate as if disability categories have universal meaning; however, disability definitions are based on cultural decisions and values. Our definition of disability has a medical model origin, not an environmental one. We believe, for example, that learning disability (LD) means there is something wrong with the child. Using our statistical model, the student has LD if his/her achievement level deviates by "x" amount from his/her ability level, which constitutes more than a "normal deviation." However, the parameters of what is "normal" are different in different cultural groups, and the school's parameters may not match those of a particular cultural group. The result being that the family may not see "the disability" that the school sees.

2. *Cultural beliefs about the family* - We have a certain set of beliefs about family practices; for example, the way the family should act and patterns of authority. Our view of the family structure reflects our view of democracy as the American way of life. When we meet families that do not reflect this view and are more authoritative, this is considered "not normal". Over the years, the courses I teach about families have become more practical and experience based. Students have to work with families, go into the home and community (e.g., go to church with them), to understand the family's perspective about the child. There is often initial resistance to this assignment on the part of the students and the supervising teacher. The teachers generally know nothing about the homes except what they see as they drive by. Their attitudes reflect widespread stereotypes that are held by many people in this society.

3. *Culturally-based participation/communication styles* - The law requires written permission for evaluation, notification of the results, involvement in discussion of IEP, notification of evaluations, etc. However, there is a discrepancy between intent of the law and how the law is generally implemented. We believe that if things are written, they are communicated; but families sign documents they don't understand. The written notice/letter serves more as an accountability tool than a communication one. Also, parents must be sent notices about conferences/meetings 10 days in advance, but, in reality, this often does not happen. Then parents have to miss work or be absent from conferences. Parent participation often decreases over time because they begin to feel their presence is pro forma. Parents say, "They don't ask me if I have time, don't ask me for any input; they just want me to sign the IEP." Another reason that parents stop going to meetings is that the only person the parent knows and trusts--the teacher--is often <u>not</u> present at the meeting. We have to structure meaningful opportunities for parental participation so that parents do not feel excluded.

Suggestions:

- Schools should be used as a community resource; they should be more than a place where the parents failed 20 years ago.

- PTAs should address special education issues. Parents of children with disabilities are usually off to the side solving their own problems.

- Parental advisory committees should be established to give on-going advice and information to parents.

- Parents should be given priority when hiring for school positions. In some compensatory education programs, such as Head Start, the law requires that parents be given such priority.

- Schools should hire from the community and seek community volunteers. Often there is no one in the school to take a telephone message in a language other than English. In most communities, there are people who would be very happy to be invited into the school 2 days a week to help with translation.

- Teachers should be in communication with the family before there is a need to refer a student to special education.

- Conference scheduling should be more flexible. In some school districts, the schools hold conferences during the evening hours to accommodate working parents, and close schools during the day to compensate teachers for their time.

- Families should be involved in the assessment process. Parents and family members can provide valuable information about family and developmental history, which is often not requested.

- Families should be involved in interventions.

- "Parent time" should be built into formal conferences. If parents know that they are on the agenda, their participation will increase. What typically happens now is that someone asks for parent comments at the end of a meeting that has been incomprehensible to the parents, or professionals ask parents about transportation matters only.

II. Outcomes of the Policy Forum

The following information was prepared using the notes taken on flip charts during small and large group sessions, and the minutes taken during large group discussions.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

During the course of the Policy Forum, there was recurrent discussion about the term "prereferral strategies." Many participants voiced concern about this term because it connotates a single act which precedes referral to special education rather than an on-going strategizing process to enhance learning. The term "intervention strategies" was recommended as a viable substitution and is used in the remainder of this document.

A. Compelling Reasons to Implement

- The demographics of our country and our schools are changing. The student population is becoming more linguistically, culturally and economically diverse and we must be prepared to educate students with a diverse set of learning strengths and needs. Intervention strategies promote flexibility in meeting the learning needs of all students.

- Due to an increasing scarcity of educational resources, educators must find ways to provide quality education in the general education setting.

- Intervention strategies fit well into reform and restructuring initiatives and mesh with the vision/mission statement in many jurisdictions to provide quality education for all students.

- Intervention strategies bring more resources to students without labeling. The intervention process is a preventative approach that supports students as the need arises, not just a way to delay or prevent a disability classification.

- Intervention strategies address the two main concerns voiced by teachers about students--diverse learning needs and behavior management.

- When a strong intervention process is in place, teachers know that they have support. This will attract personnel and prevent teacher burnout because it makes teaching a more gratifying experience.

- Intervention strategies facilitate the education of all students and are not the exclusive domain of special educators.

- This is a cost-effective way to serve students in general education classroom and avoid costly litigation.

- Intervention strategies promote interdisciplinary collaboration within the school and interagency coordination among other service providers.

- The intervention process is a learning experience for teachers and parents.

B. Barriers to Implementation

1. Attitudes and Perceptions

- It is human nature to resist change and new ideas.

- Public education changes slowly.

- Intervention strategies are not yet recognized as a benefit for all students.

- Many teachers take the stance that a student who cannot learn or behave like the others should be out of the classroom. This may represent a lack of shared ownership or negative attitudes about diversity.

- Intervention strategies are seen as another burdensome step in the special education process; they are another hurdle to jump before a referral can be made.

- Teachers do not feel empowered to do anything in their classroom about learning and behavior problems because their role is narrowly defined by training, credentials, practice and tradition.

- If a concept is not learned the first time, the student and/or teacher may be viewed as a failure; then the student must be passed on to a specialist. We do not make it easy for a teacher to get support or accept responsibility for student learning.

- There is a perception that more funding is needed to implement intervention strategies; little effort is made to use existing funds differently.

- There are territorial issues on the part of special and general educators--a student "belongs" to either special or general education.

2. Laws and Policies

- There is limited coordination regarding intervention strategies across the local, state, and federal levels.

- There are misconceptions about how procedural safeguards (e.g., timelines) operate in regard to students who are in need of different educational strategies or different types of support.

- Local and state policies often do not speak to the issue of intervention strategies.

- Directives come to the school level without long-term commitment in the form of guidelines, training and financial backing. Teachers may react negatively to what they perceive as "the program of the month."

- Management and funding systems were originally set up for a dual system--special and general education. These systems are now rigid and inflexible, and therefore, it is difficult to obtain resources to support students not classified as disabled.

- There is a lack of coordination between goals of state education agency (SEA) and legislature, as well as a lack of coordination between general and special education reform.

- There is a lack of involvement of institutions of higher education in education reform efforts.

- Traditionally special education has been a place rather than a set of services or educational strategies.

3. Time and Space

- Classroom teachers are overloaded and grappling with many responsibilities. They continue to get more to do without additional support.

- Class sizes are large in most schools.

- There is limited time for staff planning, meeting and consultation, particularly with related service staff (e.g., OT, PT, resource teacher, speech therapist); classroom teaching is very isolated work.

- The design and structure of current educational buildings/facilities do not foster coordination, consultation and collaboration.

4. Training and Staff Support

- Staff development/training is rarely school-wide and typically not on-going.

- Funds for staff development/training are limited.

- There is a lack of leadership and guidance from school boards and school-level administrators in the area of intervention strategies.

- Outdated methods of teacher training and credentialing. There is a need to teach more skills and less content, and provide more practicuum opportunities.

- Classroom teachers (novice and veteran) lack skills to strategize and problem-solve with their colleagues, using a consultative model.

- There is limited support and guidance for the novice teacher.

- There is a lack of coordination between institutions of higher education and public schools regarding training in this area.

5. Other

- The best teachers are traditionally placed in the best schools. The teachers most capable of implementing an intervention process are not in the schools where such a process is most needed.
- There is high teacher mobility and "burn-out" in some places.
- There is limited involvement of families and a lack of meaningful effort to increase parent involvement on the part of schools.
- There is limited dissemination of research and best practices in the area of intervention strategies, which prevents general educators from benefitting from the experiences of their colleagues.
- There is a paucity of research in the area of intervention strategies.

C. Critical Components of an Implementation Plan

- A national policy on children that stresses a commitment to educate all children, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Revised federal policy in all offices (e.g., Bilingual, Migrant, Civil Rights, Special Education Programs) which reflects an emphasis on the intervention process (Reauthorization may be the appropriate time to do this)
- Well-defined responsibilities for implementation at the federal, state and local level
- On-going feedback from other national organizations and groups (e.g., National Association of State Boards of Education, Council for Exceptional Children, teacher unions)
- Flexible funding formulas which encourage jurisdictions to use intervention strategies
- Recognition of successful practices in the community and around the country on which to build future success
- User-friendly data collection systems to facilitate the intervention process
- State and local policy which is responsive to changing demographics and reflective of the intervention process

- Integration of the intervention process into existing and future education reform initiatives (e.g., Goals 2000) and reflection of this process in key documents (e.g., state and local plans, fiscal applications)

- A leadership and management structure at the school level that reflects shared ownership of all the students

- Assurances that families are an integral part of the intervention process, and that such a process does not preclude due process rights or procedural safeguards

- An in-service plan which empowers teachers and leads them to embrace the intervention process as "good teaching" for all students

- Redefined roles for specialists (e.g., reading teachers, behavior specialists, speech therapists), which reflect the philosophy of the intervention process, accompanied by training

- An overall in-service plan which meets the needs of the community and is supported by personnel and funds

- Longitudinal evaluation of the intervention process which is integrated into the overall school plan in order to avoid isolated and short-term initiatives

- Continued use of the problem-solving process during the eligibility and assessment stage, if a referral to special education is necessary

RECOMMENDATION #2: Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of home-school collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

As the small and large group discussion proceeded on Recommendation #2, the first part of the recommendation (Training should...heterogeneous student population) came to be referred to as "multicultural education." This term is used in the remainder of this document.

It is also important to note that during course of discussion on Recommendation #2, the phrase "home-school collaboration" replaced the original phrase "parent-professional collaboration." This change occurred because the word "home" more clearly reflects the demographic reality that the responsible adult in the home of many children is not necessarily a parent. The replacement of "professional" with "school" reflects the idea that collaboration should occur with the school as a cohesive entity, not with individual professionals.

The participants in this Policy Forum, particularly those in the small group working with Recommendation #2, felt that this recommendation covered two related, but distinct issues--multicultural education and home-school collaboration. The latter issue was not covered as adequately as the former, and warrants more attention. The issues raised in regard to home-school collaboration are included below.

A. Compelling Reasons to Implement

- The student population in the United States is becoming more culturally, linguistically and economically diverse; however, our teaching force is not changing as quickly. Teachers need to be trained to work with our diverse student population.

- Our aging teaching force was trained in an era of less student diversity and fewer societal problems. Our current workforce must be re-trained, and our new workforce must be trained differently.

- Students who have a strong and positive ethnic self concept are more successful in school. Our ethnically diverse student population must succeed in school in order to enter the workforce ready to become contributing members of our society. Failure to prepare our students will result in loss of earnings, unemployment, societal unrest, and wasted human potential.

- Multicultural education enriches and benefits the scho l staff and community, not just students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- This recommendation is in the spirit of current educational reform and Goals 2000.

- The understanding of diverse cultures and ethnic groups will help schools build on and use the cultural resources in the community to improve education; this empowers the community. Every person and community has cultural resources.

- Multicultural education helps to eliminate stereotypes, increase respect, and enhance communication. Communication about educational strengths and needs is critical because disability definitions are culturally based; disparate definitions may lead to misunderstanding and conflict between home and school.

- Multicultural education helps people interpret conversation, information, behavior and learning styles effectively, and builds harmony among people.

- Home-school collaboration breaks down rigid roles and attitudes that professionals and families have about each other.

- Home-school collaboration creates an environment of mutual respect and support.

- Home-school collaboration is critical because we are a more litigious society than we were in the past. Training in this area may reduce court costs.

- Family involvement improves academic achievement and student behavior.

- Families have a great influence because children are only in school a small percentage of their time. Home-school collaboration maximizes the educational experience.

- Poverty has a negative effect on education; home-school collaboration can offset this effect significantly.

B. Barriers to Implementation

- The phrase "multicultural education" is often used, but there is no clear agreement on its definition.

- The phrase "multicultural education" has political connotations and generates negative reactions for some groups of people.

- There is a myth that multicultural education means acceptance of all behaviors from "other" cultures.

- Opposition to multicultural education can be very strong and well-organized.

- There is a certain ambivalence in our country about the education and integration of culturally and linguistically diverse students, especially documented and undocumented immigrants. Strong ethnocentric feelings exist in some communities.

- There is a lack of compatibility between the Federal immigration policy and multicultural education efforts.

- There is no national policy on children; therefore, no framework on which to implement this recommendation.

- Although there are many models of multicultural education, there is a paucity of data on outcomes.

- The composition of policy and decision-making boards do not reflect the diversity of their constituency.

- Teachers do not receive the professional respect they deserve; therefore, it is difficult for them to take on the challenge of working with a culturally and linguistically diverse student population.

- Family and community involvement is at best minimal in many communities.

- "Family involvement" is very narrowly defined and options for involvement are often limited. Families can foster educational progress in many different ways, not only volunteering at school or attending meetings.

- There is a myth that some culturally and linguistically diverse families, and poor families, do not value education.

- Conflicting priorities of families living in poverty interfere with home-school collaboration.

- Some families lack the skills necessary to advocate for their children, which interferes with home-school collaboration.

C. Critical Components of an Implementation Plan

- Federal and state policy on children that reflects a commitment to educate all children, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and prompts local school districts to develop policy

- Dissemination of information to the general public on the changing demographics of our communities and schools

- A clear definition of "multicultural education" (or whatever term is used)

- Community-developed objectives for multicultural education (e.g., to enhance self awareness, to discover how different cultural groups are similar and dissimilar in terms of views, practices and beliefs, to understand how culture influences how we live and view life events, and to develop cross-cultural competence)

- Meaningful inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse community members into the school to help dispel notion of "melting pot"

- Clearly-defined "multicultural skills" critical for different educational roles and future occupational success

- Recognition of effective models of multicultural education and home-school collaboration in the community and around the country

- A broadened definition of home-school collaboration and parent involvement, which includes one-on-one activities at home as well as school-based involvement

- Strengthened ties between institutions of higher learning and the community for the purpose of improved pre-service training in the areas of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- State certification requirements which reflect the importance of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- Comprehensive and on-going in-service training in the areas of multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- State and local funding for training initiatives, which links multicultural education to existing initiatives and requirements

- Locally-generated strategies to work with well-organized and loud, albeit small, opposition groups

- Grant application processes which reflect the commitment to multicultural education and home-school collaboration

- Integration of multicultural education and home-school collaboration into existing and future reform efforts

III. Summary and Next Steps

Project FORUM, under contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, has been examining the issue of disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education for more than a year. Examination has included an analysis of state polices and practices, a review of current research and theoretical positions, and two Policy Forums--one in June 1993 and the second in August 1994. The most recent Policy Forum was convened to develop an action plan to implement the following recommendations, which emerged as the highest priority from the activities conducted in the previous year:

- Prereferral strategies should be an integral part of the educational process and made available to service providers prior to the initiation of a formal assessment; training should be provided in this area.

- Training should be provided to address the diverse learning strengths and needs of an increasing heterogeneous student population, including training in the area of home-school collaboration; family members from different ethnic/racial backgrounds should be used as resources.

These recommendations indicate strong support for preventative/pro-active measures to ameliorate disproportionate representation. In the spirit of Goals 2000, the highest priority recommendations address the educational needs of all children.

During the course of the Policy Forum, participants delineated compelling reasons to implement the recommendations and barriers to their implementation. Critical components of an implementation plan were also identified.

OSEP will continue to examine the issue of disproportionate representation in the future, with the support of Project FORUM at NASDSE. Activities may include refinement of the action plans outlined at this Policy Forum, and a more thorough review of home-school collaboration as it relates to the disproportionate representation. In addition, the development of policy, which facilitates state and local awareness building and substantive program initiatives, will be addressed. Future activities will continue to involve a broad group of stakeholders, including parents, teachers from general and special education, researchers, and federal, state and local policymakers.

APPENDIX A

Participant List

Participant List

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APPENDIX B

Background Materials for Policy Forum

Background Materials for Policy Forum

Fletcher, T. & Cardona-Morales, C. (1990). Implementing effective instructional interventions for students. In A. Barona & E. Garcia (Eds.), *Children at risk: Poverty, status, and other issues in educational equity* (pp. 151-170). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychology.

Guild, P. (1994). The culture/learning style connection. *Educational Leadership*, 51(8), 16-21.

Harry, B. (1994). *The disproportionate representation of students in special education: Theories and recommendations*. (Deliverable 5-1-1). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Lara, J. (1994). *State data collection and monitoring procedures regarding overrepresentation of students in special education*. (Deliverable 6-1-3). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Project FORUM at NASDSE. (1993). *Disproportionate participation of students from ethnic and cultural minorities in special education classes and programs: Forum to examine current policy*. (Deliverable 9-1-1). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Project FORUM at NASDSE. (1994). *Disproportionate representation of students from ethnic/racial groups in special education: A synthesis of major themes and recommendations*. (Deliverable 5-2-2). Alexandria, VA: The National Association of Directors of Special Education.

Appendix C

Agenda

Agenda

Disproportionate Representation of Students from Minority Ethnic/Racial Groups in Special Education:

A Policy Forum to Develop Action Plans For High Priority Recommendations

August 25-26, 1994

Thursday, August 25, 1994

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Welcome *Joy Hicks - Director, Project FORUM*
	Opening Remarks *Thomas Hehir - Director, Office of Special Education Programs* *Lou Danielson - Director, Division of Innovation and Development*
9:15 - 9:30	Background and Goals for the Forum *Joy Hicks*
9:30 - 9:45	Participant Introductions
9:45 - 10:30	Introduction of Speakers *Joy Hicks*
	Overview and Insights into Priority Recommendations *Robert Solomon - Coordinator, Professional Development Programs for Special Education/Consulting Teachers Program, Baltimore City Public Schools* *Beth Harry - Assistant Professor, University of MD*
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:00	Work Plan, Ground Rules & Small Group Composition *Joy Markowitz - Policy Analyst, Project FORUM*
11:00 - 12:15	Identification of Compelling Reasons & Barriers (small groups)
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch

1:00 - 1:45	Large Group Input on Compelling Reasons & Barriers *Joy Hicks*
1:45 - 3:15	Action Strategies/Steps to Implementation (small groups)
3:15 - 3:30	Break
3:30 - 4:15	Large Group Input on Action Strategies *Joy Markowitz*
4:15 - 4:45	Wrap-up for the Day & Forum Logistics *Lyn Sweetapple - Administrative Assistant, Project FORUM* *Joy Markowitz*
Evening	Optional Group Dinner

Friday, August 26, 1994

8:00 - 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Opening Remarks *Martha Fields - Executive Director, NASDSE* Plan for the Day *Joy Markowitz*
9:15 - 10:30	Finalize Action Plan: Identify party responsible & timeline (small groups)
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:30	Large Group Input on Action Plan *Joy Markowitz*
11:30 - 12:00	Final Wrap-up *Joy Hicks*

APPENDIX D

Success Tips for Effective Prereferral

SUCCESS TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PREREFERRAL

Prepared by Robert Solomon - Baltimore City Publie Schools

1. Make certain that the school building administrators have stated a clear, undeniable policy regarding the necessity, sequence and procedures associated with prereferral activities **and** that their actions support their policy.

2. Someone in the building **must** be assigned the basic responsibility of taking the lead to drive the procedures and to assist general education teaching staff in the implementation of alternative instructional and behavioral strategies, even if on a part-time basis.

3. Identify the right "mix" of staff to reside on the School Support Team (SST) that will meet on a weekly basis to intercept cases that are on their way to special education assessment for the development of a three week intervention plan (e.g. RIDE Action Plan).

4. Have the team demonstrate the actual meeting timing and outcomes for all to see and further discuss.

5. Include everyone in the school community in the process from the inception (e.g., paraprofessionals, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria staff, parents, and business partners).

6. Send information home to parents about the availability of assistance to **them** through the SST and the alternative tactics.

7. Make the process as easy and appealing to teaching staff as possible like minimizing paperwork, forms, and time consumption -- it is not a sign of weakness!

8. **Always** schedule follow-up meetings to discuss the initial outcomes of alternative interventions, most usually three weeks, and make expectations **reasonable.**

9. Encourage the them of "Our Kids" Not your Kids".

10. Provide as much staff development as possible on diversity of student learning modalities, behavioral coping styles, and proper behavioral descriptions for desensitization purposes.

11. Begin to make staff aware of the impact of **their** behavior in relation to student behavior and that the world has changed somewhat (e.g. media, drug culture, family unit variations, cultural variations, etc.).